INTRODUCTION

Hope and Healing Series 4 offers a final set of thirteen study guides prepared to help people who have been challenged by their personal struggle with their failures, weaknesses, guilt, shame, hopelessness, and despair, but who are longing to live victorious lives in Christ.

In this series, the focus is on accepting God's plan for our lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God desires to restore in us a Christ-like character to His honor and glory. As was noted in the introduction to Series 3, it is God's desire that we "*share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.*" (2Pet.1:4) So, with this thought in mind, this series takes its direction from the fruits of the Spirit, as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control", to form the foundation for these lessons.

Character development is integral to the process of sanctification. Building on the biblical basis for change, these lessons dig deeper into the process of character reformation. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to work with us and in us to ultimately achieve God's purpose; the restoration of His divine nature, His character in us.

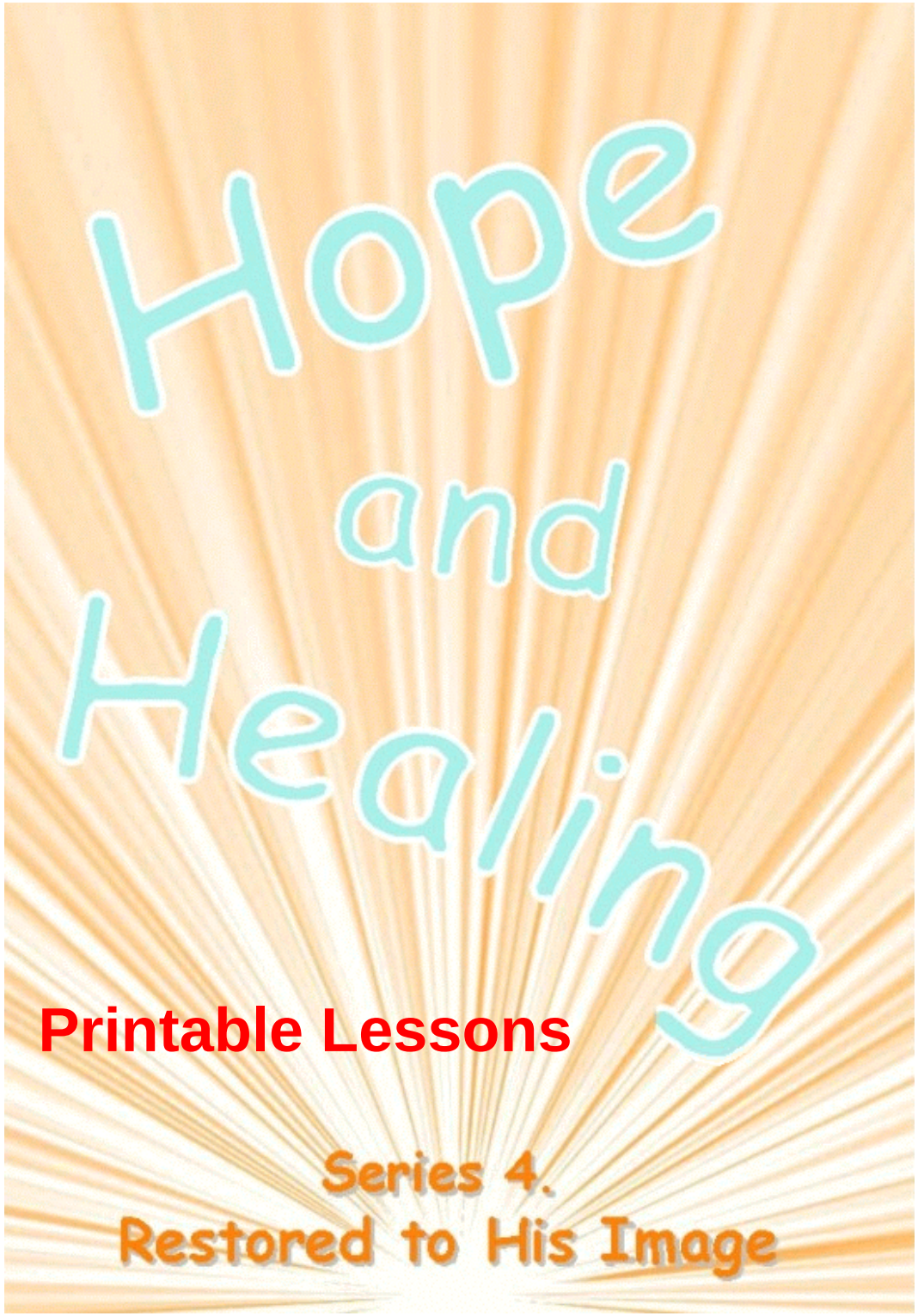
While the previous three series follow the 12-Step Recovery format fairly rigidly, this series touches briefly on Steps 1 and 10 but focuses more seriously on what needs to happen in Steps 4, 6, 7 and 11.

The developers of the 'Hope and Healing' program trust that these lessons will provide meaningful support to those that read and study them with the desire for real, Holy Spirit changing character development and ongoing sanctification. And because of this hope may your pathway to spiritual healing be realized. Let the everlasting love of God, the redemptive love of Christ, and the in-filling love of the Holy Spirit be with those who share these lessons of Hope and Healing together and with others.

Pr Leon N Powrie

for the Hope and Healing Team

Reedy Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church



HOPE AND HEALING
Restored to His Image

Series 4

A final set of thirteen Christ Centered
Bible based discussion guides
with a strong focus on character development
and designed for use in a Twelve step Study Group

CREDITS

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The Hope and Healing Team would also like to acknowledge other authors and publishers that have been used in a limited way in these lessons and are referenced in situ.

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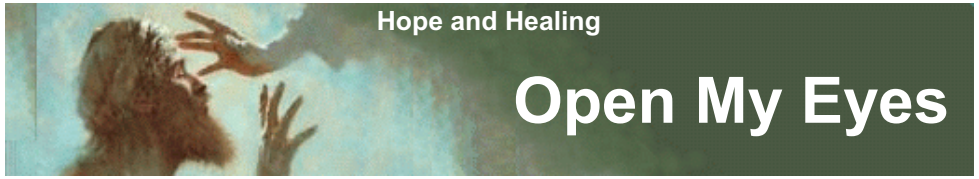

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Ps.119:18NIV)

The State of Spiritual Blindness

As in the natural world, there are many causes of blindness and levels of impaired vision, so in the spiritual realm, there are a number of causes and levels of spiritual blindness. Let us explore and discuss some of these:

1. **Spiritual Ignorance (born blind)** - "*But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!* " (Matt.6:23) "*For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*" (Rom.10:3)
2. **Scoffers & Mockers (willing ignorance)** - Peter reminds us that "*in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. . . . They deliberately forget* [are willingly ignorant]" that God created all things and used a flood to destroy the evil antediluvian world. (see 2Pet.3:3-6) These are skeptical secularists with atheistic views.
3. **Satanic Sophistry** - "*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News.*" (2Cor.4:4) This form of "blindness" requires a miracle of grace.
4. **Spiritual Shortsightedness** - Mark records the healing of a blind man who, when first touched by Christ did not see clearly. He said, "*I see people; they look like trees walking around*" (Mark 8:24NIV) These may be called "cultural Christians" who are satisfied with a superficial understanding (short sips) of the gospel. These need a second touch from the healer to correct their hazy vision of God's grace and glory.
5. **Doubts and Unbelief** -Thomas suffered this form of impaired vision. When told that Jesus had risen from the dead he said, "*I won't believe it unless I see . . .*" (John 20:25)
6. **Greed** - Jesus warns us, "*Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.*" (Luke 12:15) Take, for example, Balaam "*who loved to earn money by doing wrong.*" (2Pet.2:15 cf. Chapter) As Jesus said, "*what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?*" (Mark 8:36)

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"So I advise you to buy . . . from me . . . eyesalve for your eyes so you will be able to see." (Rev.3:18)

Even as Jesus used saliva and dust to make a clay-based balm to apply to the eyes of the blind, we too need an application of eyesalve to our spiritual eyes so that we can have clear spiritual discernment. Ellen White, commenting on Revelation 3:18, made this observation, "the eyesalve is that spiritual discernment which will enable you to see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detect sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it." (EGW, Testimonies for the Church, Vol.5, p.233) In another place, she equates the eyesalve with the grace of God which gives us clear discernment of spiritual things and helps us detect the presence of sin. (see 3T, 254)

Ponder Peter's Remedy for Spiritual Blindness (2 Peter 1:2-9)

"*May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence*.

"*And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to* ***share his divine nature*** *and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, . . . knowledge, . . . self-control, . . . patient endurance, . . . godliness, . . . brotherly affection, and . . . love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

"***But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind*** *. . .*"

Reflections

"Clear discernment is needed--the spiritual eyesalve, which we can obtain only by becoming partakers of the divine nature." (EGW, Pamphlet 088)

How does the sentiment of the sixth-century Irish poem below relate to the statement above?

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

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7. **Pride and Self-sufficiency that breeds Indifference** - Jesus' message to Laodicea is, "*You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.*" (Rev.3:17)
8. **Religiosity** - Paul, speaking of his religious zeal before his encounter with Christ, admits, "*I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. . . . I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.*" (Acts 26:9-11)
9. **Discouragement** - Take the example of Cleopas and his companion walking to Emmaus that resurrection morn. When Jesus (unrecognized) began walking and talking with them, Luke records that "*They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.*" In their discourse, they said, "*We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel.*" (Luke 24:17,21 cf. context)
10. **Hatred** - "*But anyone who hates another brother or sister is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.* " (1Jn.2:11)

Jesus, in explaining why He used parables, said, "*That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand.*" Spiritual blindness is a perception problem. None of us have 20/20 vision. Paul says, "*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*"

Let Us Consider

Example 1.

Bartimaeus Timaeus and a friend were sitting just outside the city of Jericho, beside the road to Jerusalem. They listened intently to the small talk of travelers passing by and sought to attract them to their personal plight. You see, both Bartimaeus Timaeus and his companion were blind. They were totally dependent on the generosity of townspeople and strangers for survival. But they were not unaware of what was going on in the city, or in the country for that matter, and they had certainly sensed the excitement of those who were heading out of the city as they shared the news of the healer from Nazareth who was passing through. Bartimaeus and his companion had heard talk that this man called Jesus had healed many blind people and their hopes were aroused.

Then, in the distance, they heard the sound of a noisy crowd coming out of the city. They sensed that this must be that healer so they began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!"The crowd told them to be quiet but they cried all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

Jesus heard their cry, stopped and called for them to come. In their enthusiasm, they cast off their cloaks and came to Him. Then he asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" They replied, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out and gently touched their eyes as he told them, "Your faith has healed you." Instantly they were healed and immediately followed Jesus. (See Mark 10:46-52 see also Matt.20:29-34)

Example 2. (Based on John 9)

Take the case of the man born blind. It was in Jerusalem that Jesus noticed this poor fellow. There was a notion that blindness was a consequence of sin but, in this case, whose sin had caused this man's blindness? Jesus rejected this notion, made clay to anoint the man's eyes and instructed him to "*Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam*". This he did and received his sight.

This miracle caused quite a stir amongst the people and the Pharisees because it was the Sabbath. The blindness of the Pharisees in contrast to the clarity of vision experienced by the man born blind is well expressed in his statement, "*Why, that's very strange! . . . He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from?*" Challenged by the inference of his words, the Pharisees expelled him from the Synagogue.

Hearing of what had happened, Jesus sought the ex-blind man and asked him,

"*Do you believe in the Son of God?*"

The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

"You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"

"Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind." "

Discussion

1. We use the term 'Vision impaired' when we speak of those whose ability to see is significantly diminished or totally absent. Discuss the types of spiritual vision impairment revealed in these examples. Are there any other examples that you can bring to the discussion?
2. On hearing Jesus response to the man born blind, some of the Pharisees present asked, "*Are you saying we're blind?*" (V.40) Do we need to ask the same question? Can we identify areas of vision impairment that affect us?
3. There is an Idiom which says, "There's none so blind as those who will not see." Discuss this statement as it relates to denial.
4. What hope is there for those who are spiritually blind? Note particularly the impact of the blindness created by religiosity as expressed in these examples.

Hope and Healing

Visions of God

"***He who has seen Me has seen the Father*** " (John 14:9 NKJV)

John, the disciple of Jesus, clearly states that "*No one has ever seen God.*" (1John 4:12) Paul writes in a similar vein to Timothy where, in describing God, he says, "*No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will.*" (1Tim.6:16). Scriptural authors paint a picture of the Almighty as a being of unapproachable glory.

"*God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all* " (1John 1:5)

"*O LORD my God, how great you are! . . .You are dressed in a robe of light.*" (Ps.104:1-2)

"*he [Almighty God] lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him.*" (1Tim6:16)

"*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" (1Tim.1:17NIV)

"*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.*" (Col.1:15)

Jesus says, "*Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.*" (John 6:46)

"The Majesty of heaven was not discerned in the disguise of humanity. . . He veiled His glory in order that divinity might touch humanity." (EGW, That I May Know Him, p.58)

Study the following Biblical stories - Consider how, in the past God, the "*LORD*" [Jehovah], has revealed Himself in a physical way to men.

Adam and Eve - "*When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" . . . And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.*" (Gen.3:8-9, 21; read the context)

Abraham - "*The LORD appeared again to Abraham . . . Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent. . . . He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby.. . . . "My lord," he said, "let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey." "All right," they said. "Do as you have said." " . . . As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees. . . . Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked. . . . When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.*" (Gen.18:1-5,17,33; explore the full context)

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Visions of God in Nature

"*The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.*" (Ps.19:1) We are blessed to have access to the glorious images of the heavens taken with powerful telescopes.

"*For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*" (Rom.1:20)

"*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see - such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.*" (Col.1:15-17)

Visions of God in humanity

"*I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well.*" (Ps.139:14 HCSB)

"*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Male and female He created them. . . He took one of* [man's] *ribs and fashioned* [it} *into a woman . . . and brought her to the man . . . and they [became] one flesh.*" (Compiled from Gen.1:27; 2:7,21-22, 24 NASB)

"When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. "God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image--the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase." (EGW, Education, p.15)

Reflecting God's Glory

1. How does the E.G. White statement above and the following statement of Paul reflect the purpose of our being? "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2Cor.3:18 WEB)
2. Share your thoughts on the wonder of coming into a personal one with one relationship with the Creator of the universe, the LORD God Almighty, our Saviour, Redeemer, and Friend ("*You are my friends if you do what I command.*" John 15:14). What are the implications of such a relationship?

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Jacob - "*. . . This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. . . . "What is your name?" the man asked. He replied, "Jacob." "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won.". . . .Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."* (Gen.32:24-30; note also V.9 where Jacob refers to God as "*LORD*" [Jehovah])

"Jacob was in fear and distress while he sought in his own strength to obtain the victory. He mistook the divine visitor for an enemy and contended with him while he had any strength left. But when he cast himself upon the mercy of God, he found that instead of being in the hands of an enemy, he was encircled in the arms of infinite love. He saw God face to face, and his sins were pardoned". (Youth's Instructor, May 24, 1900)

Moses and the elders of Israel - "*Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel climbed up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in his presence!*" (Ex.24:9-11)

Discussion:

1. If no one has ever seen God because of the unapproachable light of His presence, the blinding brightness of His glory, who did these Patriarchs see?
2. Read Hebrews 1:1-3 then discuss the evidence in these verses that help identify the One who appeared as the visible and physical presence of the LORD God.
3. Saul's / Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9. Discuss the phenomena that blinded Saul but was not seen by his companions.

Visions of God in Christ

"*Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.*" (John 14:8-11)

Earlier the Jews had confronted Jesus with the question, "*How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.*" As part of His response, He stated, "*"The Father and I are one." Once again the people picked up stones to kill him. Jesus said, "At my Father's direction I have done*

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many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?" They replied, "We're stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God." " (John 10:24,30-33)

This was not the first time Christ's life had been threatened. He had been defending Himself against the accusation, "*Your witness is not true*". In His defense, He aligned Himself with His Father declaring that "*I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me.*" They had claimed Abraham as their father and had also stated that "*God himself is our true Father*". It was when Jesus said to them, "*I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!*" His claim to pre-existence as the I AM riled the Jews and they took up stones to attack Him. (see John 8:13-59)

The most significant and succinct statement regarding the vision of God in Christ is found in the first chapter of John. It says:

> "*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. . . . He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. . . . So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.* " (John 1:1-4,11,14)

Visions of God in His Word

"*You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!* " (John 5:39)

The day of Christ's resurrection, two disciples were talking about the weekend events as they walked toward Emmaus. As they were talking, Jesus, who appeared to them as a stranger, joined them and began listening to their confused story. "*Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*" (Luke 24:25-27)

"Christ as manifested to the patriarchs, as symbolized in the sacrificial service, as portrayed in the law, and as revealed by the prophets, is the riches of the Old Testament. Christ in His life, His death, and His resurrection, Christ as He is manifested by the Holy Spirit, is the treasure of the New Testament. Our Saviour, the outshining of the Father's glory, is both the Old and the New." (EGW, Christ Object Lessons, p.126)

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2. "We are to praise God by tangible service, by doing all in our power to advance the glory of His name. God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world." (EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, p.300)
   a. Share your thoughts on "tangible service" that brings glory to God.
   b. Consider how your giftedness makes known His character.
3. Reflect on the following statement. "Those who sing should make an effort to sing in harmony; they should devote some time to practice, that they may employ this talent to the glory of God." (EGW, Review and Herald, July 24, 1883) How does this principle apply to all aspects of worship?

The Glory of God Experienced

"*I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.*" (Eph.3:16-21)

"The glory of God, the perfection of Christian character, is to be the aim, the purpose of our life. Christ's followers must imitate Christ in disposition. The Pattern is given us to copy, and no excuse will be accepted of God as a reason for not meeting the divine standard, however contrary it may be to our own nature, our own selfish desires and inclinations." "The transforming power of grace can make [us] partaker[s] of the divine nature."
(EGW, Daughters of God, p. 169; Sons and Daughters of God, p.124)

"It was a wonderful thing for God to create man, to make mind. The glory of God is to be revealed in the creation of man in God's image and in his redemption."
(EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.246)

Share Your Experience

1. Share how God's glory has touched and transformed your life.
2. How has the glory of God expressed in the lives of others influenced your path to a life lived to God's glory?
3. Paul speaks of God's "*glorious, unlimited resources* ". Discuss some of these resources and how they have impacted your life.

REDEEMED, HOW I LOVE TO PROCLAIM IT!

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"*So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*" (2Co 3:18)

We closed the last lesson by considering a more literal translation of the above text. The idea of reflecting in our lives an increasingly clearer image of our glorious Lord is expressed in the original Greek with the words "apo doxēs eis doxan" which is literally translated as "*from glory to glory* ". This phrase is preceded by the Greek word "metamorphoumetha" from which we get the word 'metamorphosis'. This indicates a progressive developmental process from one state through intermediate stages to another more glorious state.

In the first lesson of Hope and Healing Series 1 we looked at the desperate situation of Hannah who felt totally devalued because of her bareness. After God had given her a son in answer to her prayer of anguish, she fulfilled her vow and gave Samuel to the service of the Lord. At this time she prayed a prayer that expresses the metamorphosing power of God to bring a person from an abject state of despair to a place of recognition, acceptance, and value. In her prayer she says:

"*He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump.*
He sets them among princes, placing them in seats of honor [thrones of glory].
For all the earth is the LORD's, and he has set the world in order." (1Sam.2:8)

In this lesson, we will explore the richness of God's glory (His great honor, praise, worth, wonder, and splendor) as it is exposed, expressed and experienced.

The Glory of God Exposed

"**When the Lord bids nature bear testimony to the things which He has made, instantly they witness to the glory of God.**"
(EGW, Mind, Personality and Character, Vol.2 p.564)

Millennia ago King David, with nothing more than the naked eye, was able to declare, "*The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.*" (Ps.19:1) Now, with all the telescopes and technology available to us today, we can see even more clearly the immense glory of God's creation as it is demonstrated in the wonders of the universe.

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Paul points out the individual uniqueness of each entity whether in heaven or on earth. He says, "*There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.*" (1Cor.15:40-41)

In Isaiah's glorious vision of the Lord, he hears one of the seraphim cry to another seraphim, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*" (Isa.6:3) Whether we use modern technology or the naked eye to visualize the splendid design detail of animate and inanimate objects we are continually confronted with evidences of God's glory.

"Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make himself known to us and to bring us into communion with him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of his hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with him who made them all." (EGW, Steps to Christ, p. 85)

"God has surrounded us with nature's beautiful scenery to attract and interest the mind. It is His design that we should associate the glories of nature with His character. If we faithfully study the book of nature, we shall find it a fruitful source for contemplating the infinite love and power of God. . . " (EGW, My Life Today, p.294)

Contemplate and Share

1. Take time to share a moment when you have been overwhelmed by the awesomeness of God's creation.
2. If it were possible to invite a group of friends or family to a place that has revealed God's glory to you, how would you describe that place in a way that would convince them to accept your invitation?
3. Share how God reveals himself to us through our senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch.
4. Compare Genesis 9:12-16 with Ezekiel 1:28.
5. How does light relate to glory? Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world.*" (John 8:12) and also "*you are the light of the world.*" (Matt.5:14)

> ***"For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ."*** (2Cor.4:6)

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The Glory of God Expressed

In Christ - "*The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.*" (Heb.1:3)

All through the pages of sacred history, where the dealings of God with His chosen people are recorded, there are burning traces of the great I AM. . . In all these revelations of the divine presence, the glory of God was manifested through Christ." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.43)

In us - The lead text to this lesson tells us that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we progressively change "*from glory to glory*" until we become *"more and more like him*" (2Cor.3:18). "*He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.*" (Phil.3:21)

"Above all lower orders of being, God designed that man, the crowning work of His creation, should express His thought and reveal His glory. But man is not to exalt himself as God." (EGW, Testimonies Vol.8, p.264)

In worship - "*Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.*" (1Chron.16:29; see also Ps.29:1-2))

"*Yes, they will sing about the LORD's ways, for the glory of the LORD is very great.*" (Ps.138:5)

"*And I saw another angel flying through the sky . . . "Fear God," he shouted. "Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water."* (Rev.14:6-7)

"*Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing his praises from the ends of the earth! . . . Let the whole world glorify the LORD; let it sing his praise.*" (Isa.42:10,12)

Give Expression to the Glory of God

1. Paul says,"*But far be it from me to glory [boast] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Gal.6:14 RSV) How can we do this?

> "***When at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain.***" (EGW, The Faith I Live By, p.103)

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Hope and Healing

On Being Loving and Lovable

"***The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.***"
(EGW, Ministry of Healing, p.470)

The essence of Christianity is love. Love that is elevated above feelings and emotions to the realm of principle and, as such, is to be understood as the embodiment of the "Divine Nature". John has simply stated it, "God is love." (1John4:8).

Love is the first of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit listed by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. The remaining eight fruits of the Holy Spirit will be covered in succeeding lessons. In this lesson, we will focus on the principle of love as it is to be expressed in loving and lovable lives.

The Command to Love

Jesus said, "*This is my command:* ***Love each other.***" (John 15:17 emphasis supplied) In response to a question about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus, quoting from the Pentateuch, said, "*'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' . . . A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*" (Matt.22:37-39) He goes on to say that these two commands are the foundation for all the prerogatives and expectations of scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus expanded the concept of 'loving our neighbour" to include love for those who hate us or would do us harm. In conclusion, He says, "*you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" (see Matt.5:43-48)

Love defined

In lesson 11 of Hope and Healing, Series 2, love is defined by citing parts of the love chapter (1Cor.13NLT). It then uses this table to summarize what love is or isn't, does or doesn't.

LOVE		
	is	patient, kind, tolerant, humble, compassionate, steadfast, consistent, trusting, hopeful, enduring, tenacious, honest, polite
	does	rejoice in truth
	isn't	jealous, rude, proud, vindictive, angry, irritable
	doesn't	boast, gloat, demand, enjoy evil, hold grudges

Take the Test: God is, by nature, love and, as such, exhibits all the attributes included in this definition of love. As seekers after the 'divine nature', let us examine our standing by substituting 'LOVE' with our name. How do we measure up?

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Love Expressed in Obedience - "*Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.*" (1John 5:3) Jesus says, "*If you love me, obey my commandments.*" (John 14:15)

Lord teach me: . . . . . .

On Being Lovable

"God wants us to let Him manage our lives, that we may be lovable Christians. The Lord would have the natural and hereditary traits of character come under the pruning knife. Let us look steadfastly unto Jesus, that we may catch His spirit and cherish the qualities of Christlike character. Then it will be recognized by all who have any connection with us, that we have learned of Christ His meekness, His affection, His tenderness, His sympathy. We should never rest satisfied until we possess a loving and lovable spirit. When our words come from the good treasure of the heart to strengthen, help, bless, and win all around us others will catch our spirit. The good seeds we sow will bear a harvest in goodness, patience, kindness, and love." (Paraphrased into the first person from EGW, That I May Know Him, p.218)

The context of the quotation at the beginning of this lesson says, "The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian." (EGW, Ministry of Healing, p.470)

Discussion

1. Consider the implications of the first sentence in the first quotation above. Which says, "God wants us to let Him manage our lives, that we may be lovable Christians.
2. Elaborate on the specific attributes listed in the first quotation that make us lovable.
3. Discuss the meaning of these phrases: 'Badge of Christianity', 'His grace manifested', 'the influence of an unselfish life' as they relate to lovableness.
4. Read the prayer below and consider making it your own personal prayer.

"Lord, You would never have commanded me to love had You not intended to enable me to do so. Therefore, right now, on the authority of Your commands for me to love and on the authority of Your promise to answer if I ask anything according to Your will, I personally claim Your love - the 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love - for You, for all people, and for myself. Amen."

(http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/classics/transferable-concepts/love-by-faith.5.html)

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How to love as God loves

God's love is unbounded. He declares, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.*" (Jer.31:3NKJV) There is something deeply reassuring to know and accept that God loves us with an everlasting, unconditional love - no strings attached.

We need to debunk the notion that we have to perform to a certain standard to merit God's love. When Jesus says, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" (John 14:15NKJV), he is **not** saying, "You must keep my commandments to merit my love", rather our love for God and indeed our love for others is a reactive response to God's everlasting love. John makes it clear when he says, "*We love because he first loved us.*" (1John 4:19NIV)

There is something in our DNA that makes us respond to love. The more we understand, appreciate and experience God's love for us, the more we are drawn inextricably into a love response. Paul understood this when he wrote, "*For Christ's love compels us*" (2Cor.5:14) The more we immerse ourselves in God's love, the more we will model God's character of love. In another letter, Paul makes it clear that "*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*" (Rom.13:10NKJV) When Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*", He was, in actuality, saying, "If you love Me, love." John understood this when he wrote, "*We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.*"

Reflections:

1. Reflect on the concept that love begets love as a cause and effect mechanism. Can the opposite be also true?
2. In light of what we have read above, and the words of Paul, "*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*" (Rom.5:8), discuss the significance of the statement in the box below.

> It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. . . . We shall love to talk of Him; and as we speak to one another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. Beholding the beauty of His character, we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3:18.
>
> (EGW, Desire of Ages, p.83)

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On Being Loving - Discuss each point. What does the Lord need to teach me?

1. **Love expressed in Fellowship and Friendship** - "*But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another.*" (1Thes.4:9) "*Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters."* (Heb.13:1) "*They have told the church here of your loving friendship. Please continue providing for such teachers in a manner that pleases God.*" (3John 1:6) "*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.*" (Rom.12:10) "*A man who has friends must himself be friendly.*" (Prov.18:24)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

2. **Love expressed in Unity and Oneness** - Paul, in writing to the Philippians, said, "*Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*" (Phil.2:2) "*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.*" (Col.3:14)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

3. **Love expressed in genuine Peaceableness** - "*But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere."* (James 3:17) Jesus said, "*"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.*" (John14:27)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

4. **Love Expressed in Compassion** - "*Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.*" (1Pet.3:8NIV) John raises the question, "*If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?*" (1John 3:17)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

5. **Love expressed in Actions** - "*As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1Thes.1:3)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

6. **Love expressed as a Constant** - "*Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true.*" (Heb.6:11) Jesus says, "*I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.*" (John 15:9)

   Lord teach me: . . . . . .

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Hope and Healing

Genuine Joy

Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return,
and come with singing unto Zion;
and everlasting joy shall be upon their head:
they shall obtain gladness and joy;
and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (Isa. 51:11KJV)

These ancient yet familiar words of the prophet Isaiah and the text of a well-known scripture song paint for us a picture of a joyful gathering together of those whose hearts have experienced renewal and restoration from the ravages and pain of a life lived in bondage and slavery. This is not a transient titillation but a full-on, 'everlasting' experience that erases all the shame and pain of the past. As David says, "*Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.*" (Ps.30:5) As the morning light penetrates and dissipates the darkness of the night, so the illuminating revelation of truth in God's Word works to eradicate the darkness of human despair and dissolution.

Digging For Genuine Joy

1. "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*" (Matt.13:44 NKJV)

   "A man hires land to cultivate, and as the oxen plow the soil, buried treasure is unearthed. As the man discovers this treasure, he sees that a fortune is within his reach. Restoring the gold to its hiding place, he returns to his home and sells all that he has, in order to purchase the field containing the treasure. His family and his neighbors think that he is acting like a madman. Looking on the field, they see no value in the neglected soil. But the man knows what he is doing; and when he has a title to the field, he searches every part of it to find the treasure that he has secured.

   "This parable illustrates the value of the heavenly treasure, and the effort that should be made to secure it. The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had, ready to put forth untiring labor, in order to secure the hidden riches. So the finder of heavenly treasure will count no labor too great and no sacrifice too dear, in order to gain the treasures of truth.

   "In the parable the field containing the treasure represents the Holy Scriptures. And the gospel is the treasure." (EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, pp.103-104)

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b. Consider Jesus own experience. "*We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*" (Heb.12:2)

c. How does the following statement help us gain a clearer perspective on the difficulties of life?

   "All the afflictions and trials that befall us here are permitted, to work out His purposes of love toward us, "that we might be partakers of his holiness," and thus become participants in that fullness of joy which is found in His presence. . . . " (EGW, Lift Him Up, p.279)

5. **Take time to share - From your personal experience, share some of your memorable moments of joy.**

Ultimate Joy

1. **In forgiveness and release from guilt (justification)** -

   "Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour's love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain."
   (EGW, Acts of the Apostles, pp.209-210)

2. **In renewal and restoration (sanctification)** -

   When our hearts are cleansed and sanctified, when we partake of the divine nature, then the power and grace of God . . . will give us fullness of joy. (derived from EGW, Evangelism, p.512)

3. **In living in His presence** -

   "*You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" (Ps.16:11 NKJV)

   "[When] we are living in [Christ's] presence, doing His work, and are in contact with [Him] and His life . . .[our] life imperceptibly becomes one with [Him] as He was one with the Father. The truth and light and life are interwoven with life and character, and the aspirations are elevated, pure, unselfish, after the order of heaven. . . ." (edited from The Upward Look, p. 296)

Jesus is the Joy of Living, He's the King of Life to me;
Unto Him my all I'm giving, His forevermore to be.
I will do what He commands me, Anywhere He leads I'll go (I'll go);
Jesus is the Joy of Living, He's the dearest Friend I know.
A.H. Ackley

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a. Compare the things learned from this parable with these words of Jesus, "*You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.*" (John 5:39-40) Do we know what we are searching for?

b. The gospel of the kingdom is said to be the treasure that brings joy to those who find it. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, and, finally, standing before Pilate, He said, "*My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom.*" (John 18:36) What is it about the good news of the kingdom that brings joy?

2. Explore the context of the following statement to understand what Jesus is saying to His disciples.

   "*I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your* ***grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy****. It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her* ***anguish gives way to joy*** *because she has brought a new baby into the world. So you have* ***sorrow now****, but I will see you again;* ***then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy****. At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have* ***abundant joy****.*" (John16:20-24)

   a. To what extent does the depth of anxiety, sorrow, grief, or anguish endured effect the level of joy experienced?

   b. Take time to share with the group a moment when you experienced personal joy. What made that moment so special?

3. Consider the experience of Cleopas, his companion, and the disciples as recorded in Luke 24. Tease out the bewildering array of emotions experienced by the disciples noting particularly verses 41 and 52-53.

   a. Identify and discuss the reason for their joy.

   b. How does David's statement quoted in the opening paragraph of this lesson resonate with the disciples experience that eventful day?

4. Jesus said, "*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*" (John 15:11NIV)

   a. Search in the context preceding this verse to discover what Jesus has told us will give us genuine joy.

   b. Consider the following three verses (12-14) and discuss the relationship of love to joy.

5. "Truth is sacred, divine. It is stronger and more powerful than anything else in the formation of a character after the likeness of Christ. In it there is fullness of joy." (EGW, In Heavenly Places, p.140)

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Expressions of Joy

1. "*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a* ***priceless*** *inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for [us], pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. . . . So be truly glad. There is* ***wonderful*** *joy ahead, even though [we] have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that [our] faith is genuine. . . . [We] love him even though [we] have never seen him. Though [we] do not see him now, [we] trust him; and [we] rejoice with a* ***glorious, inexpressible*** *joy.*" (1Pet.1:3-8 adjusted to maintain the first person)

   a. Consider the superlatives Peter uses in this statement.

   b. While the process of birth is a traumatic experience for the baby, consider the travail of the one who gives birth. Then, reflect on these words from Isaiah, "*When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish* [travail]*, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.*" (53:11)

2. Jesus told three parables about being lost and then being found. Review the record of them in Luke 15 and consider not only the expressions of joy experienced by the shepherd, the woman, and the father but also the expressions of heavenly joy when a soul is saved.

   a. Let's put it in perspective. Our salvation is so important to God that He sacrificed all for the joy of our redemption. Reflect on the joy that our salvation brings to the heavenly courts.

3. Jeremiah found joy in consuming God's word. He says, "*Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.*" (Jer.15:16NKJV)

   a. How relevant is our personal Bible study to our experience of joy?

   b. David says, "*Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!* " (Ps.34:8) Share your 'taste experience' of the Lord and level of joy and gladness it has engendered.

   c. "When our hearts are cleansed and sanctified, and we partake of the divine nature, the power and grace of God will cause melody in the heart and will give us fullness of joy." (Derived from EGW, Evangelism, p.512)

4. "*What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven.*" (Luke 6:22-23)

   a. Evaluate the experience of Paul and Silas as recorded in Acts 16:16-25.

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Hope and Healing

Perfect Peace

"*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,*
all whose thoughts are fixed on you! " (Isa.26:3)

These words are so reassuring, so comforting. God is the provider of perfect peace. Isaiah goes on to say, "*Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.*" (V.4) There is a hymn by Edward Mote which declares, "On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." From the safety of the solid, eternal, unmovable rock we can be at perfect peace even through the storms and vicissitudes of life. Fanny Crosby, using imagery from the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai, penned these words, "He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand." Not only do we have the safety of solid rock to stand on but we are hidden in the cleft of His everlasting love and tender, unfailing care.

In an earlier lesson entitled 'Let God Give Me Peace' is an acrostic based on the word 'PEACE'. Using this acrostic, let us explore, in greater depth, the gift of perfect peace.

Perfect Peace

"*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*" (Isa.26:3KJV)

There is deep significance in the word 'in' as used in this verse. It indicates an abiding assurance and a comforting certainty for those whose faith is firmly fixed in Christ, the solid Rock.

Commenting on this scripture, Ellen White states,

> "Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. . . . Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory" (Desire of Ages, p.331)
>
> "The more [we] taste this heavenly peace and quietude of mind, the more it will increase. It is an animated, living pleasure which does not throw all the moral energies into a stupor, but awakens them to increased activity. Perfect peace is an attitude of heaven which angels possess" (Lift Him Up, p.94)

"*Those who love your instructions have great peace and do not stumble.*"
(Ps.119:165)

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What Perfect Peace is not

In quoting John 14:27 earlier, the words "*not as the world gives do I give to you*" were not included. World efforts to maintain peace through peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts among people who have not attained a state of personal peace is nigh impossible.

1. "Peace that is enforced is a time bomb ready to be triggered." How true is this statement? Discuss world and community peace efforts in the light of what we have studied. Is there a real solution to the problem of attaining peace?
2. Read Acts 7:22-28 (cf. Ex.2:11-15) and then discuss where Moses went wrong.

Finally

In closing his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul wrote, "*Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*" (2Cor.13:11) Peace is an essential element of wholeness, completeness.

We opened this lesson with a rendering of Isa.26:3. The King James Version reads, "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.*" The hymn writer, Edward Bickersteth, heard a sermon based on this text in which the minister explained that the Hebrew text used the word 'peace' twice so a literal translation would read, 'Thou wilt keep him in peace peace whose mind is stayed on Thee,' The repetition of the Hebrew word conveys the idea of absolute perfection. After hearing this sermon, Bickersteth wrote the following poem as consolation for a dying relative. The words in italics are said to have been added later and are not part of the original version.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.
Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.
Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.
Peace, perfect peace, 'mid suffering's sharpest throes?
The sympathy of Jesus breathes repose.
Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.
Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.
Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.
It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And [He will]* call us to Heaven's perfect peace. (* Jesus)

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Experience and Enjoy

"*I will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace.*" (Is.54:13)

"*Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.*" (Ps.119:165 ESV)

"*Look at those who are honest and good, for a wonderful future awaits those who love peace.*" (Ps.37:37)

The Psalmist tells us that the Lord "*guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*" (Ps.25.9NIV) Those who are humble and teachable, who love the truth of God's word will taste and experience the animated attitude, the living pleasure of the perfect peace of heaven. (See Lift Him Up, p.94) "Those who are comforted of God, who experience peace and rest in him, will bear rich clusters of fruit in comforting others with the consolation which they themselves have received from the compassionate Saviour." (EGW, Signs of the Times, August 15, 1898)

Perfect peace is a consequence and expression of a deep and abiding relationship between the Teacher and the humble, teachable child of God. It is an evidence of the presence and power of love lived out in the life. Isaiah declares, "*The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever.*" (Isa.32:17RSV)

Accept the Gift

"*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (John 14:27NKJV)

The New Living Translation of John renders these words of Jesus this way. "*I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.*" When Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman beside Jacob's well He said, "*f you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."* (John 4:10) The Lord, our teacher says, "*Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river*". (Isa.48:18)

Horatio Spafford's hymn, 'It is Well With My Soul', begins with the words, " When peace like a river . . ." Here is a man who, in the face of tragedy and extreme loss, responded to the offer of divine peace. The acceptance of this gift calmed his spirit and he could write, "No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life, Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul". (see Series 3, Lesson 10)

"The springs of heavenly peace and joy unsealed in the soul by the words of Inspiration will become a mighty river of influence to bless all who come within its reach." (EGW, Education, p.192)

"Oh Lord, I accept your gift of peace. Let it flow through me as a gift to others."

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Covenant of Peace Confirmed

"*And this I say, that the law, . . . cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.*" (Gal.3:17 NKJV)

Through the prophet, Ezekiel, the Lord said, "*I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant.*" (Ezek.37:26) Paul, referencing the prophet Jeremiah, declares, "*This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Then he says, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds."* (Heb.10:16-17 Cf. Jer.31:33-34) This is the everlasting covenant of peace ratified with the blood of Jesus, the "*lamb slain from the foundation of the world*". (Rev.13:8KJV) The significance of this covenant is that it forms the foundation of God's relationship with all humanity through the merits of Jesus Christ. Even as the ark was the repository of the covenant of love written on stone by the finger of God, so our hearts are to become the repository of His everlasting covenant of love - His divine nature imparted, grace - His justifying mercy accepted and peace - His sanctifying presence experienced.

"God is himself the Rock of Ages, a refuge for his people, a covert from the storm, a shadow from the burning heat. He has given us his promises, which are more firm and immovable than the rocky heights, the everlasting hills. The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but his kindness shall not depart, nor his covenant of peace be removed, from those who by faith make him their trust." (EGW, Signs of the Times, December 23, 1897; cf. Isa.54:10)

Express

"*God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.*" (Matt.5:9)

Perfect peace is living and active - expressed through attitudes and acts. Consider the admonition of James and Peter in the following quotes.

"*But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.*" (Jam.3:17-18)

"*Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it. For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.*" (1Pet.3:8-11; cf. Ps.34:14)

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Hope and Healing

Profound Patience

"Patience is a virtue . . ." goes the old familiar cliché. But what is meant by this character quality, what does it mean to be patient?

> In the New Testament, there are two Greek words that, in their various forms, are used to convey the concept of patience. They are *hypomonē* and *makrothymia*. "*Hypomonē* is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering, '*makrothymia*' is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. The one is opposed to cowardice or despondency, the other to wrath and revenge." Used in an active form, they describe the qualities of endurance, constancy, steadfastness, and perseverance through misfortunes and trials - that is, to bravely and calmly endure ill-treatment. When used passively, they refer to forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs and also to wait, remain or tarry behind. (Base on Blue Letter Bible Lexicon)
>
> Patience is complex and calls into play other related virtues such as self-control, humility, and generosity. Each is an essential quality that complements and enhances the expression of patience, perseverance, and forbearance under testing circumstances.
>
> Jesus said, "*And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who **endures*** [is patient] ***to the end** will be saved.*" (Matt.10:22) Peter reiterated the essence of these words when he wrote, "*For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and **patiently endure** unfair treatment.*" He goes on to explain, "*Of course, you get no credit for being **patient** if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and **endure it patiently**, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.*" (1Pet.2:19-24 emphasis supplied)

Discussion

1. Identify Bible characters who demonstrated high levels of patience.
2. In light of the definition of patience given above, work together to tease out an understanding of what it would mean to have or develop profound patience.

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Finally - ponder each point in this acrostic.

P	**Persistent in prayer**	"*Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*" (Eph.6:18)
A	**Acquiesce to God, serve each other**	"*So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (Jam.4:7) "*Serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud but favors the humble. So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.*" (1Pet.5:5-6)
T	**Trust in the LORD**	"*Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*" (Prov.3:5) "*Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you.*" (Ps.37:5)
I	**Identify with Jesus**	"*May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*" (2Thess.3:5) "*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" (Gal.2:20)
E	**Endure**	"*And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*" (Mark 13:13)
N	**Never give up**	"*No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*" (Phil.3:13-14)
C	**Claim the gift**	"*May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.*" (Rom.15:5)
E	**Engage in the race**	"*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.*" (Heb.12:1)

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Christ, The Perfect Example of Patience

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is pictured as standing at the door and knocking, waiting patiently for a response to His invitation to a personal relationship with Him (see Rev.3:20). He has just identified the problem of the Laodicean church, a church that thought they were going great but were actually destitute. He admonishes them to "*be diligent and turn from [their] indifference.*" (Rev.3:19)

Remember the sorrowful words uttered by Jesus the last time He spoke with the people in the temple just days before His crucifixion. He had been reminding them of their consistent rejection of God's messengers, "*prophets and wise men and teachers*" (Matt.23:34) Then, seeing their continued belligerence, He cried out, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.*" (V.37) Those words 'How often' are brought into perspective when we consider the scene several days later when Christ hung on the cross as the *"lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Rev.13:8 KJV) Yet, while He endured the agony and ignominy of the cross, He was able to say, "*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.*" Such was His profound patience.

"*Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.*" (Heb.2:9-10)

"*Therefore . . . let us run with* ***perseverance*** [*hypomonē*] *the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he* ***endured*** [*hypomonē*] *the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who* ***endured*** [*hypomonē*] *such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*" (Heb 12: 1-4)

"*The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*" (2Pet.3:9)

Time to Contemplate

1. Ponder the profound patience of our Lord and Saviour. Meditate and muse for a moment on the driven nature of Christ's patience, perseverance and forbearance.
2. The Lord says, "*I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.*" (Jer.31:3) Consider the enduring nature of God's love and compare our own expressions of patient love.

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Perfecting Patience

Seneca, a Roman philosopher and contemporary of Jesus and Paul, and brother of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia who had dismissed the accusations of Jews against Paul, made this statement:

> "Prosperity unbruised cannot endure a single blow, but a man who has been at a constant feud with misfortunes acquires skin calloused by suffering; he yields to no evil and even if he stumbles carries the fight on upon his knee." (The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), 30-31)

Patience is strengthened through struggle - Paul reminds us, "*The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*" (1Cor.10:13)

Learn patience while watching and waiting - James admonishes us to "*be patient as [we] wait for the Lord's return.*" (James 5:7) Paul said, "*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*" (1Cor.16:13) Both James and Paul are reiterating Jesus' instruction, "*So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.*" (Mat.25:13) The greater our anticipation the greater the need for patience. Jesus gives us this promise, "*Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world.*" (Rev.3:10)

Further study: Mark 13:9;32-37

Develop patience with difficult people - "*A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.*" (2Tim.2:24) People can really test our patience. Unfortunately, we fall within the category of 'people' and we may even be 'difficult' at times. Christ's counsel to keep our conversation simple is easily said but not always easily done. He says, "*let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*" (Matt.5:37) This suggests that we avoid arguments and controversy, that we keep our conversations simple, factual and concise, and that we think before we utter a word.

Further study: 1 Timothy 4:7-16

Discover

1. Read carefully the twelfth chapter of Romans. How many elements of Christian life do you see relating to or requiring patience? On the basis of your findings, how profoundly important is patience?
2. Read carefully Romans 5:3-5 then discuss how these verses relate to your own enduring growth in Christ-likeness.

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Christ-like Compassion

"*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" (Mat.9:36)

C	Christ-likeness	Paul says, "*Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God.*" (2Cor.2:15) Let this fragrance be expressed in our loving and lovable lives.
O	Objective empathy in action	"*If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? . . . let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.*" (1John 3:17-18)
M	Merciful	Mercy and compassion go hand in hand. "*This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.*" (Zech.7:9 NIV)
P	Pity	"*He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.*" (Prov.19:17 NKJV)
A	Active in alleviating the distress of others	"*And you know that . . . Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*" (Acts 10:38) "*Dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.*" (2Thess.3:13)
S **S**	Self-sacrificing Service	"The Lord's blessing will attend His church as they advance unitedly, revealing . . . the beauty of holiness as manifested in a Christlike spirit of self-sacrifice, in an exaltation of the divine rather than the human, and in loving and untiring service for those so much in need of the blessings of the gospel" (EGW, Prophets and Kings, p.74)
I	Inspired involvement	"*As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1Thess.1:3)
O	Overflowing grace	"*And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. . . As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you.*" (2Cor.9:8,13-14)
N	Nurturing the needy	"*There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*" (Acts 4:34-35)

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Hope and Healing

Compassion & Kindness

"*The LORD is compassionate and merciful,*
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love." (Ps.103:8)

Humans were created in the image of God with characteristics and qualities that are reflective of His divine nature. Compassion is one of those deep-seated traits that is, in some measure, innate to our being. Indeed, researchers into the mechanisms of the mind have come to the conclusion that compassion is a human response "deeply rooted in our brains, our bodies, and in the most basic ways we communicate. What's more, a sense of compassion fosters compassionate behavior." (Dacher Keltner, Ph.D. http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_compassionate_instinct)

In exhorting the believers in Colosse to lives of Christlikeness, Paul wrote these profound words:

> "*Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved,* ***put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience****, accepting one another and forgiving one another . . . Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.* ***Above all, put on love - the perfect bond of unity***." (Col.3:12-14 HCSB)

These are powerful and profoundly moving words. Just prior to writing these profound words Paul had directed the Colossians to "*Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.*" (Col.3:10) Let us spend some time digesting the deeper implications of what Paul is teaching.

1. Explore the relationship between the terms 'new nature' and 'divine nature', and the experience described by Isaiah, "*I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels.*" (Isa.61:10)
2. In our previous lesson, we explored the quality of profound patience. Discuss the link between patience and heartfelt compassion. Why are kindness, humility, and gentleness sandwiched between these two?
3. "*Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.*" (Heb.13:3) Discuss how heartfelt compassion is expressed through empathy.

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A God of Compassion

Remember how Moses was asked to climb Mount Sinai again after he had, in anger, smashed the two stone tablets on which the LORD had written the decalogue with his own finger. He was instructed to prepare then bring two new tablets of stone so the LORD could rewrite the commandments on them. On reaching the summit, "*The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! **The God of compassion and mercy**! I am slow to anger and **filled with unfailing love and faithfulness**. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. **I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.** But I do not excuse the guilty.*" (Ex.34:6-7) In this declaration we see revealed the essentials of God's beautiful character, a description echoed through the words of David "*But you, O Lord, are **a God of compassion and mercy**, slow to get angry and **filled with unfailing love and faithfulness**.*" (Ps.86:15)

Pause to ponder:

1. In a moment of quiet meditation, let our minds dwell on the awesome character of God and the significance of this revelation to the expression of His divine nature in our person.
2. Consider Moses response to this revelation of God's character. "*Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped.*" (V.8) Consider how we should worship the God of compassion, and love.
   a. How can we "*Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name* "?
   b. How can we "*Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness*"? (Ps.29:2)
   c. "*I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies [i.e. compassions] of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*" (Rom.12:1RSV)
3. The Lord declares, "*I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin* ". In light of this revelation of the divine nature of God can we not, as David did, pray this prayer with confidence and assurance, "*Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.*" (Ps.51:1)

> We cannot impart heaven's light unless we have received it. We cannot reveal a Saviour, of whom we have no knowledge. [We] cannot teach others of Jesus and his righteousness, [we] cannot portray his matchless love and the fullness of his grace, [we] cannot picture him as the Christian's all in all, as the comforter and guide of men, unless [our] own heart is filled with his love. [We] will not be able to present God as a God of compassion and love unless [we] can say, "I have tasted, and know that the Lord is good." (EGW, The Home Missionary, Nov.1,1890-edited to 1st person)

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The Compassionate Outsider

"*A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance, a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Levite walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.*

"*Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two denarii, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'*

"*Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.*"

"In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness. . . . He showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God." (EGW, The Desire of Ages, p.497; Lift Him Up, 154)

"*Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.*" (James 1:27)

Mahatma Gandhi is quoted as saying, "It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business."

Come let us reason

1. The priest and the Levite failed to show compassion to their fellow Jew. Expose the ways compassion can be compromised by spurious religiosity?
2. Examine our own attitudes and beliefs and try and determine to what extent the world has numbed or corrupted our expression of Godly compassion.
3. Discuss the extent that the 'mere business' of the 'church' interferes with the "quintessence of true religion" as stated by Gandhi.
4. Formulate a personal Mission Statement based on compassionate neighbourliness.

. . . . . .

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Hope and Healing

Godly Goodness

Goodness can be defined as 'the state or quality of being good', the embodiment of moral excellence, virtue, and righteousness. Goodness is a positive state of being in contrast to the negative state of badness or evilness. Paul, quoting from the Psalms, writes, "*No one does good, not a single one.*" (Rom.3:12; Cf. Ps.14:3;53:3) Certainly, this has been the general state of mankind since that moment in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve abdicated their 'very good' state and chose to eat of the forbidden fruit from the tree of good and evil. Their God-given goodness was negated by one small but significant act of disregard, disobedience, and doubt.

The Measure of Goodness

In our previous lesson, we reviewed God's revelation of himself to Moses when He declared His compassion, mercy, unfailing love and faithfulness (see Ex.34:6-7). Moses had been in intimate conversation with God seeking assurance that He would continue to lead and be present with His people. Toward the end of the conversation, Moses made a bold request of God. He asked,"*Please, show me Your glory.*" The Lord began His reply with these words, "*I will make all my goodness pass before you . . .*" (Ex.33:18-19 NKJV) God is all goodness. Goodness that is expressed in His uncompromised compassion, His measureless mercy, His unfailing love and forever faithfulness.

The God of all goodness created a 'very good' world to provide an abundantly good life for man and all living creatures. In His goodness, He created man in His image and likeness with the capacity to reason and the freedom to choose. He created them for a leadership role as carers and custodians of all created life. (see Gen.1:26-29)

Paul says, "*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*" (Eph.2:10) "*For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*" (Jer 29:11) Micah declares, "*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*" (Mic.6:8 NKJV)

Without the ability to reason, there is no capacity to choose. Without the power of choice, there is no capacity to love. Without love, there is no goodness. Without goodness, there can be no godliness.

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Nurture unity - "*Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. "You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them.*" (Rom.15:5-6,14) "*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!* " (Ps.133:1 NIV)

"Christian unity is a mighty agency. It tells in a powerful manner that those who possess it are children of God. It has an irresistible influence upon the world, showing that man in his humanity may be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are to be one with our fellow men and with Christ, and in Christ one with God. Then of us can be spoken the words, "Ye are complete in Him." (EGW, My Life Today, p.276)

Experience God's Goodness - "*My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.*" (Ps.23:5-6)

"If we have a sense of the goodness of God in sending His Son to die for sinful man, and if we keep that interwoven into our experience and riveted in the mind, we shall have such love for those for whom Christ died that there will be no [desire for] supremacy. . . . While we are worshiping God there will be no hatred, no envy, no evil surmising. . . . Wonderful is the work that God desires to accomplish through His servants . . . . Those who are willing to be used will obtain a rich experience, an experience of the goodness of God." (Compiled from EGW, 1888 Materials, p.79 and Manuscript Releases Vol.16 p.75)

Savor and Share God's Goodness - In 1 Peter 2:3 Peter references Psalm 34:8: "*Taste and see that the Lord is good!* " Paul puts it this way, "*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?* " (Rom.2:4)

"The lives of those who are connected with God are fragrant with deeds of love and goodness. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them; their influence is to elevate and bless. . . . Christ would have every one of us a savor of life unto life. He would impute to us his righteousness, in order that we may communicate his goodness, mercy, and love to fallen humanity." (Compiled from EGW, Review and Herald, Aug.24,1886 and Signs of the Times, Nov.7,1895)

Sacrificial Service - "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" (Rom.12:1 NKJV)

"*Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God*" (Heb.13:15-16)

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Explore the Extent of God's Goodness

1. What does Jesus mean when He says, "*But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" (Matt.5:48)? Consider the context of this statement (Vs.38-47) Discuss the relationship between being perfect and being good.
2. The Greek word translated 'perfect' in Matt.5:48 conveys the idea of completeness and consummate human integrity and virtue. God expresses His perfect goodness through His uncompromised compassion, His measureless mercy and forgiveness, His unfailing love and forever faithfulness. Reinforce these concepts by examining the following references and then note down your observations in the space provided:

   a. "*The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.*" (Ps. 145:8-9) "*Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? . . . My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows.*" (Hos.11:8) . . . .

   . . . . . .

   b. "*Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.*" (Isa 55:7) "*He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.*" (Luke 1:50) "*He saves us . . . because of his mercy . .* " (Tit.3:5)

   . . . . . .

   c. "*But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.*" (Ex.20:6) "*"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.*" (Jer.31:3) "*He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth.*" (Ps.33:5)

   . . . . . .

   d. "*Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created.*" (Ps.119:90) "*The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*" (Lam.3:22-23) "*. . .God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.*" (John 1:17)

   . . . . . .

Our God is an awesome God
He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom, power, and love
Our God is an awesome God. Rich Mullins

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Growing in Goodness - "*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*" (Col.2:7)

"Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. **Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct.** We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity." (EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, p.355 - emphasis supplied)

Opening the Heart to Instruction - "*Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you.*" (Ps.86:11)

"Let us take our Bibles, and with humble prayer and a teachable spirit, come to the great Teacher of the world; let us pray as did David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18)" (EGW, Pastoral Ministry, p.27)

Obeying the Good God - "*Help me abandon my shameful ways; for your regulations are good. I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.*" (Ps.119:39-40) "*the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.*" (Rom.7:12)

"The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. . . . God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy." (EGW, The Desire of Ages, p.308)

"When human sympathy is blended with love and benevolence and sanctified by the Spirit of Jesus, it is an element which can be productive of great good. . . . Every kind and sympathizing word spoken to the sorrowful, every act to relieve the oppressed, and every gift to supply the necessities of our fellow beings, given or done with an eye to God's glory, will result in blessings to the giver. Those who are thus working are obeying a law of heaven and will receive the approval of God. . . . " (EGW, Welfare Ministry, pp.304-305)

Demonstrating God's Goodness - "*Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.*" (Isa. 1:17) "*Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive.*" (Tit.3:14)

"God has laid [upon every truly converted soul] the obligation of co-operating with him who gave his life for a perishing world. . . . Let your light so shine that those who are perishing in their sins may learn of God's goodness, mercy, and love." (EGW, Review & Herald, July 7, 1903)

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perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me." (Phil.3:12) Constancy is never giving up despite the slip-ups. He adds, "*I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*" (V.14)

"God permits trials to assail [us], that by [our] constancy and obedience [we] may be spiritually enriched, and that [our] example may be a source of strength to others. . .[Our] patient endurance and joyful constancy, [supported] by an unseen power, is a powerful testimony in favor of the Christian's religion and the Christian's Saviour. These light afflictions will be a transforming power, refining, purifying, ennobling, and fitting [us] for the courts above. The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange." (Compiled and personalized from EGW, Conflict and Courage, p.45; Daughters of God, p.218)

"Love is the golden chain which binds believing hearts to one another in willing bonds of friendship, tenderness, and faithful constancy; and which binds the soul to God." (EGW, Gospel Workers, p.92)

Loyalty - "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" (Mat.6:24 NKJV) The words of Jesus are clear and conclusive. Loyalty is expected - such as was found in the church at Pergamos.

The Lord said, "*I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city.*" (Rev.2:13 NLT)

To Adam and Eve, the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden was a test of loyalty. "It is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service, that wins the divine approval. Every impulse of the Holy Spirit leading men to goodness and to God, is noted in the books of heaven, and in the day of God the workers through whom He has wrought will be commended." (EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, p.361)

The choice is before us. Either we enter a steadfast covenant relationship evidenced by loving, living loyalty to God and sealed for eternity with the signet ring of His sacred time, or we serve the mammon of self-centered disaffection. May our prayer be as the psalmist prayed, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.*" (Ps. 51:10)

Take Time to Meditate on "God's unfailing love and faithfulness" as expressed in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus our Saviour and then reflect on how the Lord is reproducing these aspects of His divine nature in us.

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Hope and Healing

Unfailing Faithfulness

"*But if you remain faithful even when facing death,*
I will give you the crown of life." (Rev.2:10)

Unfailing faithfulness, as we learnt in our last lesson, is a characteristic of God's goodness. In this lesson, we want to explore unfailing faithfulness as a quality of a Spirit-directed and Spirit-filled life. Jesus put it this way, "*If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities.*" (Luke 16:10)

Faithfulness is a broad palette that encompasses a wide spectrum of valued character traits. Using FAITHFUL as an acrostic, let us explore what it really means to have unfailing faithfulness.

Fearless Fidelity - At the end of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul admonishes the faithful followers of Christ to "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*" (1Cor.16:13 KJV) It takes courage to fight the battle of faith. As David puts it, "*Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.*" (Ps.27:14)" James comments, "*For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*" (James 1:3-4)

"The greatest want of the world is the want of men-- men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall." (EGW, Education, p.57)

Absolute Allegiance - The very first two commandments in the decalogue call us to a position of absolute allegiance to the creator God of the universe. The third commandment calls us to respectful allegiance to the Lord's name as the author of Hebrews writes, "*Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.*" (Heb.13:15-16) The fourth commandment calls us to an active evidence or sign of that allegiance by remembering the sanctity of the Sabbath. (See ex.31:13)

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"The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from false gods. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man's allegiance to God. The fourth commandment is the only one of the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver, the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God." (From Eternity Past, p.212)

"Could all see Christ before the throne, waiting for their prayers, waiting for them to surrender their will, to cease their rebellion and come back to their allegiance to God, in deep penitence they would pray the Father to forgive their transgression of His law, and [their influence] in causing others to disregard the law of Jehovah." (EGW, The Upward Look p.155)

Inerrant integrity - "*Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool. . . The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children who follow them.*" (Prov.19:1ESV; 20:7) "*O LORD, I give my life to you. . . May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you.*" (Ps.25:1,21)

Paul, in writing to Titus, says, "*And you yourself must be an example . . . by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can't be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.*" (Tit.2:7-8)

"In the history of Joseph, Daniel, and his fellows, we see how the golden chain of truth may bind the youth to the throne of God. They could not be tempted to turn aside from their course of integrity. They valued the favor of God above the favor and praise of princes, and God loved them and spread His shield over them. Because of their faithful integrity, because of their determination to honor God above every human power, the Lord signally honored them before men." (EGW, Messages to Young People, pp.27-28)

Trustworthiness - "*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*" (Prov.11:13) Solomon also speaks of how refreshing it is for an employer to have a trustworthy messenger. (see Prov.25:13) It is said of the construction supervisors who were responsible for the repair and maintenance of the Temple during the reigns of Joash and Josiah, that "*they were honest and trustworthy men.*" They were so trustworthy, they were not required to account for the money entrusted to them to restore the temple. (2Kings 12:15; 22:7 and context) Jesus said, "*if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?.*" (Luke 16:11)

"Trustworthiness in your place and calling, a willingness to deny self for the purpose of benefitting others, will bring peace of mind and the favor of God. . . It is by faithfulness in little things that we become trustworthy sentinels." (EGW, Testimonies Vol.4, p.353; In Heavenly places, p.231)

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Honesty - When talking about honesty the cliche, "Honesty is the best policy" comes to mind. Attributed to Benjamin Franklin, it presents a simple principle for success that is easily revered but frequently dishonoured. The English bard, William Shakespeare, is quoted as saying, "No legacy is so rich as honesty." To have the reputation of being an honest person is highly desirable. It is so desirable that even the dishonest feign honesty so as to gain the advantage.

Isaiah speaks of the rich legacy of honesty in this way, "*Those who are honest and fair, who refuse to profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticement to do wrong - these are the ones who will dwell on high.*" (Isa.33:15-16) This sentiment is supported by Ezekiel's enjoinder, "*Use only honest weights and scales and honest measures, both dry and liquid.*" (Ezek.45:10)

"When responsibilities are to be intrusted to an individual, the question is not asked whether he is eloquent or wealthy, but whether he is . . . honest, faithful, and industrious; for whatever may be his accomplishments, without these qualifications he is utterly unfit for any position of trust." (EGW, Testimonies, Vol.4, p.413)

Fervour or zeal - Paul, in writing to the church in Rome, encourages them to maintain the momentum of the gospel with these words, "*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*" (Rom.12:11 NIV) This is a message that is repeated in the Lord's admonition to the Laodicean church, "*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*" (Rev.3:19) There is no room for lukewarmness in the life of a zealous, fervent follower of Christ. Faith exercised equates to faithfulness in fulfilling Christ's Commission to take the Gospel to the world.

"As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.290)

"Christians who are constantly growing in earnestness, in zeal, in fervor, in love,--such Christians never backslide." (EGW, Review and Herald, June 7, 1887)

Unfailing Constancy - Despite a stern rebuke for tolerating a false prophet, the Lord offered the church in Thyatira this commendation, "*I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.*" (Rev.2:19) There is always room for improvement in the development of Christ-like characters. Paul says, "*I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that*

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Hope and Healing

Gently, Gently

"*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*" (Phil.4:5 NKJV)

Gentleness is a lived attribute gained through experience and practice. In outlining the fruits of the spirit, Paul places gentleness with self-control (see Gal.5:22-23 NLT). There is nothing wimpish about gentleness. It is a quality that demands certainty, self-control and practiced mastery. Even as consistent practice is required to develop the steady and competent hand of a skilled surgeon who would patiently and gently perform delicate surgical procedures, so a Christ-like demeanor of gentleness will only become a reality through practice and exercise.

Gayle D. Erwin, in his book 'The Jesus Style', states, "Gentleness is not apathy but is an aggressive expression of how we view people. We see people as so valuable that we deal with them in gentleness. . . . To be apathetic is to turn people over to mean and destructive elements, to truly love people causes us to be aggressively gentle."

Dictionaries describe gentleness as having the qualities of a mild and kind nature or manner. A manner that is both gracious, honorable and even-tempered. Gentleness exudes kindness and consideration with a spirit of fairness and compassion. These are qualities that are so well expressed in the life and character of Christ and were demonstrated so consistently during His ministry on this earth.

Charles Wesley wrote a prayer poem for children that reads, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, . . . Thou wast once a little child. Fain I would be as Thou art, Give me Thy obedient heart; Thou art pitiful and kind, Let me have Thy loving mind. . . Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb, In Thy gracious hands I am; Make me, Saviour, what Thou art, Live Thyself within my heart. I shall then show forth Thy praise, Serve Thee all my happy days; Then the world shall always see Christ, the Holy Child, in me." That is a prayer that every child of God needs to pray.

In his great work 'The Messiah', Handel wrote a beautiful Air for Alto based on the poetic words of Isaiah which read,"*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*" (Isa.40:11) Jesus said, "*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*" (John 10:11)

"The true nature of our religion is not found in the position we occupy, but in the gentle spirit, the kindness, the peace which we manifest." (EGW, Our High Calling, p.179)

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Living Examples - Paul, in writing to Titus, asked him to remind the believers, among other things, that "*they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.*" (Tit.3:2) To Timothy, he wrote, "*Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*" (1Tim.4:12) And to the Philippians, he wrote, "*Let your gentleness be known to all men.*" (Phil.4:5 NKJV)

"All who seek to reach the Bible standard will stimulate others also to press forward to higher attainments. One whom God is teaching will animate others by his ardent, active efforts for the honor of Christ, and his undying love for souls. In another, a Christ-like meekness and gentleness of spirit will be most apparent. Another will influence many by his fervent charity, his brotherly kindness, and Christian courtesy. Still, another will manifest such humility and brokenness of heart as will lead the proud and stubborn to self-abasement." (EGW, Review and Herald, Nov.7, 1882)

"None but a wholehearted Christian can be a perfect gentleman; but if Christ is abiding in the soul His spirit will be revealed in the manner, the words, and the actions. Gentleness and love cherished in the heart will appear in self-denial, in true courtesy." (EGW, Testimonies to Ministers, p.264)

Extending Gentleness - "*A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. . . . Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*" (Prov.15:1,4)

"[We] are to represent Christ in His meekness and gentleness and love. . . . True gentleness is a gem of great value in the sight of God. . . . If [we are] filled with the love of Christ, [we] will manifest courtesy, kindness, tender regard for the feelings of others, and will communicate to [our] associates, by [our] acts of love, a tender, grateful, happy feeling. It will be made manifest that [we are] living for Jesus. . . . [We] will be able to say to the Lord, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." (Ps.18:35)" (EGW, My Life Today, p.53 adjusted to the 1st person)

"We should study more earnestly the character of our Saviour. We should imitate the lovely Pattern that God has given us. We should dwell upon the matchless charms of Jesus until there will be nothing satisfying in this perishing world. We should desire to reflect his image in kindness, in courtesy, in gentleness, and love, then "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." In a little while every one who is a child of God will have his seal placed upon him. O that it may be placed upon our foreheads! Who can endure the thought of being passed by when the angel goes forth to seal the servants of God in their foreheads?"

(EGW, Review and Herald, May 28,1889)

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Take time to Discuss the following concepts:

1. Being aggressively gentle as an expression of love.
2. Meek and mild gentleness that is not apathy.
3. Gentleness as an expression of true religion.
4. Gentleness in the home, at work, in the community, and in the church.
5. Resting in the gentle arms of Jesus (cf. Wesley's prayer poem).

On Being Authentically Gentle

In calling those who are burdened down by the cares of this world to come and find rest in Him, Jesus says of Himself, "*for I am gentle and humble in heart*" (Matt.11:29 NIV). The authenticity of Jesus gentleness is seen in His genuine compassion, kindness, and concern for us and His ready submission to the will of His Father for our sakes. "He would have [us] lay off the yoke of pride, so galling to the neck, and take his yoke, which is easy, for it is the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (EGW, Review and Herald, Sept.8, 1885) It is through a yoked relationship with our Lord that we may learn of Him and from Him, and, in learning, become like Him. Let us explore how we can have authentic gentleness by using the word GENTLE as an acrostic.

G enuine wisdom - Ellen White made this observation, " Genuine wisdom is full of gentleness, mercy, and love." (Signs of the Times, October 30, 1901) James tells us that "*the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.*" (James 3:17-18) Paul tells us to "*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.*" (Rom.12:10)

"In [our] dealing with others . . . [let us] first seek the Lord for wisdom and grace, that in trying to be faithful [we] may not be rude. [We] ask Him to give [us] the gentleness of Christ; then [we] will be true to [our] duty, true to [our] position of trust, and true to God, a faithful steward, overcoming natural and acquired tendencies to evil. . . . Gentleness and love cherished in [our] heart[s] will appear in self-denial, in true courtesy." (EGW, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp.263-264 adjusted to the 1st person)

E vident to all - "*Let your gentleness be evident to all.*" (Phil.4:5 NIV) Gentleness is the glow of goodness, the tender touch. It illuminates without blinding, it guides without force, it teaches by example and it corrects courteously. The prophetic description of our Saviour portrays Him as a gentle shepherd. It is said of Him, "*He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*" (Isa.40:11.)

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"In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing. . . . Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). In every one Christ's long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world"

(EGW, The Desire of Ages, pp. 826-827)

N urturing Gentleness - In speaking of his nurturing care for the believers in Thessalonica, Paul says, "*But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*" (1Th 2:7 NIV) Both Matthew and Luke record a similar maternal response when Jesus lamented the recurrent recalcitrant attitude of Jerusalem. He said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.*" (Matt.23:37) In saying this, Jesus reveals His patient desire to gently nurture His people.

"He who receives Christ by faith is a member of the royal family, . . . The full and entire renunciation of self that appeared in Christ appears in him. He shows Christlike gentleness, by speaking kind, compassionate words, words which are full of comfort, and hope, and love. He is filled with solicitude for human souls." (EGW, Signs of the Times, July 11, 1900)

T raining the Temperament - Paul uses his own personal experience to point out the need to strive for the mastery, to be disciplined. He says, "*I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.*" (1Cor.9:27)

Few of us, if any, are born with a genuinely gentle temperament. It is a learnt attribute developed over time. Ellen White writes, "Be polite to those with whom you come in contact; thus you will be polite to God. . . . We are here to copy the character of Christ, to become familiar with His gentleness, His lowliness. . . . By patience, kindness, forbearance, we are to show that we are not of the world, that day by day we are learning the lessons that will fit us to enter the higher school." (EGW, The Upward Look, p.248)

"Christ's yoke is a yoke of patience and gentleness and long-suffering. Those who learn His meekness and lowliness learn also how to love one another as He has loved them. They reach the place where they refuse to criticize and condemn others. They learn that there is committed to them a work that no one else can do for them--the work of learning of Christ." (Ibid. p.359)

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Hope and Healing

Living the Humble Life

"*So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*" (Mat.18:4)

Here, in these words of Jesus, is conveyed an essential principle for living an abundant life. True greatness, as measured by God, is found in childlike humility. This is a powerful and persistent teaching of Jesus, indeed it was His life and it need be ours if we would enter His kingdom of glory.

Jesus used two parables to press home the principle quality of true greatness. In these parables, He exposes the emptiness of pride, the antithesis of humility, and presents humility as the essentiality of greatness.

Parable 1: Jesus had been invited to a prominent Pharisees home one Sabbath for lunch. He observed the group dynamics of those invited and noticed how the guests sought to sit in the places of honor. He took this as an opportunity to teach an important lesson in true greatness.

He said, "*When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.*

"*But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests.*"

Then He ends with the punch line, "*For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* (Luke 14:8-11 NIV)

What Can We Learn:

1. Discuss this parable in light of Paul's words, "*Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.*"
2. What place does self-assertiveness have in this scenario?
3. Read Matthew 23:1-12 and discuss the additional insights we can gain from Jesus expanded teaching in these verses.

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Walking Humbly with God

"*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*" (Mic.6:8 NKJV) This text lays out before us three clear relational requirements that are integral to a safe and satisfying walk with God.

1. **Do justly** - "*There is joy for those who deal justly with others and always do what is right.*" (Ps.106:3) To deal justly with others is a relational act of honesty and fairness. It is the right thing to do. The Lord clearly wants us to address this area of our lives. Speaking through Isaiah, He says, "*Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.*" (Isa.1:16-17) To do justly is a proactive selfless stance free from pious pretense, ritualistic religiosity, and false humility but filled with compassion, and care. The Lord directs us, again through Isaiah, "*Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*" (Isa.58:6-7) This is our humble duty.
2. **Love Mercy** - In the beatitudes, Jesus says, "*God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*" (Matt.5:7; cf. Ps.18:25) Mercy is a godly quality, a generous nature (see Ps.37:26) which we are encouraged to seek. Jude says, "*May God give you more and more mercy, peace, and love.*" (Jude 1:2)
3. **Walk Humbly** - True greatness is evidenced by true humility. "*So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*" (Matt.18:4) The third beatitude tells us that the meek will inherit the earth (see Matt.5:5) The New Living translation renders it as "*God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.*" This has been an assurance for multiple generations.

   When speaking to Solomon at the dedication of the first temple, the Lord said, "*Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*" (2Chron.7:14) Solomon, in his later years, was able to say that the "*Fear of the LORD teaches wisdom;*" and that *"humility precedes honor.*" (Prov.15:33) When Paul was returning to Jerusalem from his preaching in Greece and Asia, and knowing he would see them no more, he spoke with the elders from Ephesus and told them, "*I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. . .*" (Acts 20:19)

Let us carefully consider the import of the following statement -

"We must clothe ourselves with humility as with a garment. Every step heavenward must be a step of humility."

(EGW', Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists, Page 139).

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Parable 2: Jesus was talking with a group of overly confident, self-opinionated and self-righteous individuals who looked with disdain on everyone else. He saw the sham of their status seeking behavior and sought to enlighten them to their barren state of self-deluded grandeur.

He said, "*Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'*

"*But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'*

"*I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* (Luke 18:10:14)

What Can We Learn:

1. Discuss how this parable illustrates the essential element in making the first step to Hope and Healing - "We admitted we were powerless over our hurts, habits, addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable."
2. Compare Solomon's proverb, "*Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.*" (Prov.29:23) with the advice of James, "*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.*" (Jam.4:10) and then discuss the motivation behind our humility.
3. Peter says, "*All of you, serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud but favors the humble." So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*" (1Pet.5:5-7) How do we do this without becoming proud of our "humility"?
4. Read Philippians 1:27-2:4. Discuss those elements that reflect "lowliness of mind", that is, "humility".

"We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness [humility]. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God." (EGW, The Desire of Ages, p.330)

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Christ our Model of Humility

"*Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" (Matt.11:28-29)

Paul writes, "*You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*" (Phil.2:5) Then he goes on to explain the nature of Christ's abrogation of His divine prerogative so as to enter fully into our experience in these graphic words.

> "*Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.*" (Phil 2 6-8)

Here, in Christ's obedience even unto death, is revealed the essence of true humility. Christ was totally committed to the eradication of sin from the universe and from our lives. His willingness to fulfill His obligation to the everlasting covenant, His active intent to bear our sins, to carry our cross, to suffer and die our death, to rise again with victory over the grave but bearing the scars of His humiliation and then to intercede for us before the Father will be the wondrous theme of our conversation throughout eternity. David assures us that "*The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged.*" (Ps.69:32)

> "In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.
>
> "It is the love of self that brings unrest. When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls."
>
> (EGW, The Desire of Ages, P.330-331)

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2. Explore and illustrate the concept of 'Freedom in Obedience'.
3. Peter writes, "*Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.*" (1Pet.2:16) Study the context of this statement (see verses 1,11-17) and determine those things that mitigate against freedom and those things that are evidence of a life lived in the freedom of Christ.
4. Paul says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom.6:14) Read Psalm 19:7-14 and note particularly verse 13. In light of these verses:-
   a. How can freedom become licentiousness?
   b. What are the dangers to our freedom afforded by presumptuous thinking?
   c. What place does God's law have in true freedom?

Consolidation and Conclusion

The Lord proclaims through Isaiah, "*I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me,* ***for I have paid the price to set you free.****"* (Isa.44:22) All major translations render the highlighted phrase, "for I have redeemed you". The 'Sun of Righteousness' heals us and sets us free from the shackles of sin (see Mal.4:2). Through His redemptive act of grace, He has saved us from the stormy sea of our failures, guilt, and despair and placed us on the secure platform of justification (see Series 1, Lesson 4). No more can sin have dominion over us. But when we place the clay of our lives into the hands of the Master Potter, He works on us to remove the lumps of inconsistency until He can reshape us into the likeness of His divine nature. This is a sanctifying process, the work of a lifetime.

We have traveled on a pathway from a position of hopelessness and despair to a more sure, secure and certain position of hope accompanied by healing. We now know by experience that Jesus is our all in all, our present Hope and our ever faithful Healer. He has redeemed us, we have received God's promise of freedom, freedom that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us continue in that freedom till Jesus comes and then into eternity.

"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ, revealed in the life, testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour."

(EGW, Messages to Young People, p.166)

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"*So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.*" (John 8:36)

It was during one of His visits to Jerusalem that Jesus made the statement quoted above. He had, earlier that day, been teaching in the temple when the scribes and Pharisees, who were seeking to discredit Him, had brought before Him a woman caught in adultery, in the very act. Jesus' masterly response to these accusers led to them abandoning their plot. As they were confronted with their own sinful state, they silently slipped away leaving the woman alone before Jesus. With her accusers gone, Jesus said, "*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*" (V.11 NKJV). In that moment she received pardon and freedom from the guilt and shame of her sinful past and a call to a life of freedom.

As Jesus continued teaching those who believed in Him, He made this statement, "*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.*" (V.34) There is nothing so enslaving as addictive behaviours goaded on by habitual twisted thinking. But we are not left without hope, there is healing in the words of Jesus who is the "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). He makes it clear that there is true freedom for those who put their trust in Him, those who remain faithful to the truth of His word. He says, "*You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" (John 8:31-32)

Truth, the Liberator

1. "*What is truth?*" Pilot questioned when Jesus declared, "*I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.*" (John 18:37-38) Jesus, who is the very embodiment of truth, prayed this prayer to His Father on behalf of His followers, "*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. . . . and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they may be sanctified by the truth.*" (John 17:17,19 NKJV)

   Pause to Contemplate - "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1Tim.1:15) and that they may be sanctified. What part does justification play in the process of sanctification? Revisit "**What Justification Is and isn't**" - Series 1, Lesson 4, page 4.
2. "*But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*" (1Cor.6:11 NKJV) Paul makes this statement after delineating a range of aberrant and abhorrent behaviours that had earlier enslaved some of the believers in Corinth but from which they had been liberated.

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Pause to Consider what we have or are being liberated from - We have taken steps to be honest with ourselves and to strip away the masks of pretense and denial. We have evaluated and accepted our ongoing need for rescue and renewal. We have examined a wide range of thought processes and practices that enslave us including our destructive desires, motives, and purposes that impact upon our behaviour and relationships. We have seen our need to let God release us from our hurts, habits, hang-ups, and obsessions; to remove our hypocrisy, correct our covetousness and clean up our conversation so that we can receive His peace (Hope and Healing, Series 1-3). What has God wrought?

3. We are on a journey from darkness and disillusionment to the glorious and liberating light of truth. Jesus promised to send another Comforter even the Spirit of truth to be with and in those who love and obey Him (cf. John 14:15-17) Truth is not only seen but experienced in our lives as the fruits of the Spirit of Truth. "*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control . . . Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.*" (Gal.5:22-23,25 - the theme of this Series).

   Let us Rejoice - It is as we experience the fruitage of the Spirit, as we are bathed in and begin to reflect the beauty and light of His divine nature that we can enjoy true freedom. Let us take time to reflect on the freedom we enjoy in Christ.

4. "*But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.*" (John 3:21 HCSB) The spotlight is clearly on those who are followers of the Light. This is not the spotlight of self-righteousness or self-glory, rather it is the spotlight of an expected standard and that standard is embodied in the life and teachings of Christ. While we need sing with the psalmist,"*Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live."* (Ps.43:3), we must remember that we are more visible on the mountaintop. This is where Jesus would have us be. He says, "*You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. . . . let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*" (Matt.5:14,16)

   On being seen yet not seen - Reflect on the following two statements.

   "No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ. . . . The life of Christ in the soul, His love revealed in the character, [makes His disciples] the light of the world." (EGW, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp.39-40)

   "He who loves God supremely and his neighbor as himself will work with the constant realization that he is a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Making God's will his will, he will reveal in his life the transforming power of the grace of Christ. In all the circumstances of life, he will take Christ's example as his guide." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.237)

Freedom from Servitude to Freedom in Servitude

"*Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.*" (Rom.6:18) So Paul wrote to the believers in Rome. He had just stated, "*Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.*" (V.16) Jesus made it clear that "*No one can serve two masters.*" (Matt.6:24)

Slavery to sin is obedience to those destructive desires, motives, and purposes that propel us into sinful practices. Slavery to righteous living is found in obeying the will of God as expressed in:-

a. **His desires for us** - "*The Lord . . . does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*" (2Pet.3:9) There is true freedom in repentance.

b. **His motives toward us** - "*I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.*" (Jer.31:3) Accepting God's love for us leads to eternal life (see John 3:16). Our love response is expressed in obedience (cf. 1John 4:19; John 14:15). There is true freedom in obedience.

c. **His purposes for us** - "*For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*" (Jer.29:11) "*God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Eph.3:10-11) Paul goes on to say, "*Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.*" (V.12) "*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*" (Heb.4:16) There is true freedom in fulfilling God's plan for our lives.

"*So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free.*" (Gal.5:1) Our freedom came at a cost, but not as a charge to us. "*God paid a high price for [us], so don't be enslaved by the world.*" (1Cor.7:23) Because of the price that has been paid for our redemption from slavery to sin, we are admonished to give honor and glory to God in the way we live. Paul says, "*For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" (1Cor.6:20 NKJV)

Think About It

1. Paul writes, "*the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*" (Rom.8:21) Review the context (V.18-30) then consider the wider implications of our freedom.